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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/PGI, EUR/SE, EB/CBED, OES/PCI

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TAGS: SENV ENRG TBIO TU

SUBJECT: TURKISH ENVIRONMENT NGOS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT BLACK SEA THAN BTC

¶11. Summary. Many of the 30 Turkish NGOs and other organizations participating in a recent UNDP meeting in Ankara expressed concern over the Black Sea coastal environment, their limited participation in environmental management, and several proposed environmental laws and regulations. They expressed no concern about the BTC pipeline but plan to track its construction closely. End Summary.

¶12. About 80 representatives of 30 NGOs, foundations, associations and other organizations from across the country participated in a UNDP meeting (4/12- 13) to review 77 small grants funded through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and UNDP. Most of the NGOs operate on a local rather than national level. They are currently implementing 34 GEF projects totaling \$800,000 that address a host of issues, from the creation of an eNetwork to research on birds to the development of environmental plans.

GREATEST CONCERN: BLACK SEA COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

¶13. The NGOs expressed greatest concern about the general environment of the Black Sea coastal region and the proliferation of polluting sources. Despite research that finds a decrease in rates of pollution, representatives of the Black Sea Environmentalists Association (KARCEV) and the Turkish Environmental Protection and Woodlands Association (TURCEK) believe otherwise based on:

-- the emergence of a new "hot spot" (point source of pollution) near Samsun created by a mobile power plant that uses 1,000 tons daily of fuel oil #6, a particularly heavy and potentially environmentally damaging oil.

-- leakage from improperly disposed of hazardous waste on Sinop's shores that increases cancer risk;

-- the continual improper disposal of domestic wastewater in Trabzon, a municipality unable to design a much-needed deep-sea discharge facility for its domestic wastewater;

-- degradation and erosion of the land and sea ecology of the East Black Sea coastline due to the construction of a shore-hugging motorway.

OF LITTLE CURRENT CONCERN: BTC

¶14. The 20 participants we spoke with -- without exception -- expressed no immediate concerns about BTC. In fact, they characterize the project as "beneficial to the whole region." However, the NGOs will monitor construction closely to determine if they will need to take future action. None of the NGOs at the meeting are located along the pipeline route. (Comment. Local NGOs are unfamiliar with the EIA format for projects that are internationally funded, such as BTC. They are more familiar with the simpler format that the Ministry of Environment (MOE) requires for domestically funded projects. End comment.)

OTHER NGO CONCERNS

¶15. Limited Participation in Environmental Projects. As an example of the limited role that NGOs play in major environmental projects, an Istanbul based NGO, the Hunting and Wildlife Protection, Development and Promotion Association, cited the \$20-million World Bank/GEF Biodiversity and Resource Management Project. The project is being implemented in Kayseri, Antalya, Artvin, and Kırklareli/Iğneada but is managed centrally out of Ankara's Ministry of Forestry (MOF). Midway through the six-year project, only national level NGOs, such as WWF and the Turkish Foundation for Combatting Soil Erosion, for

Reforestation and for the Protection of Natural Habitats (TEMA) have been involved.

16. Proposed Laws Pending in Parliament. Turkey's environmental NGO community is concerned that several proposed amendments to existing laws -- specifically, the mining law and tourist area laws -- may relax environmental standards in sensitive areas. NGOs are also concerned that a proposed amendment regarding the sale of forest areas could deflect their efforts to purchase and protect that land from development or further degradation.

17. Lack of Effectiveness of the Civil Society. The MOF and MOE are developing Turkey's first biodiversity strategy but only three NGOs are actively engaged in the process: WWF; the Rural Environment and Forestry Problems Research Association (KIRCEV), and TEMA. Some NGOs simply decline to participate in the development of new strategies or to comment on proposed laws based on past experiences in which their voices are not heard. Others learn of new issues too late to participate. The result is an ineffective environmental civil society.

PEARSON